



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

the nativity & adoration cycle of the
Chester Mysteries



as played in new york on christmas eve at
The greenwich village Theatre
frank conroy and roy mitchell — — — editors
published by egmont h. arens in new york



Daniel L. Quirk, Jr.

**To
Marguerite
this little book is
affectionately
dedicated.**

Chester plays.

THE NATIVITY AND ADORATION CYCLE OF

The Chester Mysteries

AS PERFORMED IN NEW YORK ON CHRISTMAS EVE AT
THE GREENWICH VILLAGE THEATRE
WITH A PREFATORY NOTE ON THE SOURCES AND METHOD OF PLAYING

INCLUDING

THE SHEAPHARDES' PLAY
THE OFFERING OF THE SHEAPHARDES
THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

E D I T E D B Y
FRANK M. CONROY
AND
ROY MITCHELL

1917

EGMONT H. ARENS, *PUBLISHER*, AT THE
WASHINGTON SQUARE BOOK SHOP
17 WEST EIGHTH STREET NEW YORK

822.08

053

1917

gift
D.C. Quirk
6-26-56

INTRODUCTION

ONLY within very recent years have workers in the theatre come to realize the dramatic values of the mediaeval religious plays. For many decades they have been available in the publications of learned societies but the tendency has been to regard them as mere curiosities and valuable only as university texts for the study of the so-called pre-Shakespearean drama. With the modern revaluation in the theatre has come a renewed interest in the communal plays of a simpler age and dramatic experiment has justified the research.

It is only to be expected that among a people whose community centre was the church, these plays should be religious in their subject matter. It is further to be expected that arising directly out of the community life of non-professional players they should be festival plays keeping step with the rhythm of the seasons. The unexpected thing about them is the dramatic merit which they reveal, when delivered from the archaisms of spelling and diction which make them seem unnatural and stilted. So modernized they are found to possess marvellous playing qualities as well as a beauty of language and thought which is rare in modern pieces.

The extant manuscripts of the mediaeval drama may be divided roughly into two classes: those called mysteries, and based upon Biblical stories, and those called moralities, occupying themselves with allegorical figures typifying the human virtues and vices. It is customary to look upon the moralities as an advance on the mysteries because they mark a movement towards the secular drama. The reverse is nearer to the truth. Dramatic presentation reveals that the morality plays represent a decadence of the more sincere and less artificial mystery drama.

Several cycles of the mysteries survive in more or less complete form. The most complete and from an

THE CHESTER MYSTERIES

artistic viewpoint the best is the Chester cycle played at Chester, England, and written down by George Bellin late in the fifteenth century. The modern text is that of T. Wright published in 1843-4. The plays were presented in complete cycle on Whitsunday and each play was allotted to one of the guilds. Information varies as to the manner of presentation but the usual custom was to play in the market place on big wagons with scenery suited to the play. Performances were also given in the chancels of churches.

In addition to their completeness and their dramatic values the Chester Mysteries possess one quality which puts them above all other like plays. They are written for the human voice. Whether this is the work of the long forgotten author or is the result of repeated performances in which the player made the alterations needed is open to doubt, but one has only to read the text aloud to perceive the breadth and beauty of the vowel sounds and the skilful handling of consonants.

Of the entire cycle of the Chester Mysteries three are especially suited to Christmas presentation and are set forth in this volume, with the emendations required for modern playing. Certain clarifications of the original spelling have been found necessary, also considerable cutting to eliminate figures only understandable in the light of mediaeval theology.

In performances these plays require the simplest technique and the rigid avoidance of any stage effects whatsoever. In the Greenwich Village Theatre festival productions the stage is set to suggest a church chancel. At the back is a tall stained glass window and in front of it an altar with candelabra and a bowl of lilies. The shepherds enter and sit upon the dais in front of the altar. The curtain is up at the beginning and is not lowered during the performance. In the places required in the plays and in the intervals between the plays there is plain-song for choir and organ.

For successful representation the acting, movement and stage business must have all the simplicity and naivete of the original fifteenth century originals. Thus played the little dramas have unbelievable beauty and power

Greenwich Village Theatre,
December 10, 1917.

F. M. C.
R. M.

**THE CHESTER
MYSTERIES**

LIST OF PROPERTIES

**Four crooks for shepherds.
Three haversacks for same.
Three bottles for same.
Horn for First Shepherd.
Tar-pot for same.
Herbs for same.
Food:
 Bone with little meat.
 Jannacke.
 Bread.
 Tongue.
Bell for First Shepherd.
Flaggette and Spoon for Second Shepherd.
Casket for First King.
Incense casket for Second King.
Casket for Third King.
Staff for Joseph.
Lily for Angel.**

**THE CHESTER
MYSTERIES**

THE CHARACTERS

Firste Sheapharde	Joseph
Second Sheapharde	Mary
Thyrde Sheapharde	Firste Kinge
Trowle	Second Kinge
The Angel Gabriel	Thyrde Kinge

Expositor

The Sheaphardes' Play

The play is given in the chancel of a church. At the back is a tall window and in front of it a high altar with candelabra and a bowl of flowers. The stage is in two levels, the rear half a foot higher. On the spectator's right is a curtain on two pillars; behind it sit Joseph and Mary. The curtain remains closed except when instruction is given in the text for the Angel Gabriel to draw it.

Firste Sheapharde enters at the left and comes to the middle, where he sits on the edge of the platform.

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

On wouldes I have walked full wyld,
Under bushes my bower to builde,
From stiffe stormes my sheepe to sheilde,
My seemlye wethers to save;
From comelye Conwaye unto Clyde,
Under tyldes them to hyde.
A better sheapharde on no syde
No yeairthlye man maye have.

Takes out articles severally.

Loe, here be my herbes safe and sounde,
Wiselye wrought for everye wounde,
That woulde a wholl man bringe to grounde
Within a littill while;
Of henbane and horehounde,
Bybbey raydishes and egremounde,
Which be my herbes saffe and sounde.
Heare is tarre in a potte,
To heale from the rotte;
Well I can and well I wotte
The cough from them take.
But no fellowshippe heare have I,
Save my selfe alone in good faye;
Therefore after one faste will I crye,
But firste will I drinke yf I maie.

He drinks. Calls off left.

Howe, Harvye, howe!
Drive thy sheepe to the lowe;
Thou maye not heare excepte I blowe,
As ever have I heale.

Blows his horn.

**THE CHESTER
MYSTERIES**

SECOND SHEAPHARDE

Enters at left and joins Firste Sheapharde.
Felowe, nowe we be well mete,
And thoughte me thinkes nedes,
Hade we Tudde heare by us sette,
Their mighte we sitte and feede us.

THYRDE SHEAPHARDE

Yea, to feede us frendlye in faye,
Crye thou muste lowde, by this daie,
Tudde is deafe and (maye) not well heare us.
Howe, Tudde, come for thy father kyn.

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

Naye, faye, thy voyce is wondrous dym;
Why, knowes thou not hym?
Fye, man, for shame!
Calle hym Tudde, Tybbes sonne,
And then will the shrew come,
For, in good faith, it is his will
To love well his dame's name.

SECOND SHEAPHARDE

Howe, Tudde, Tybbes sonne!

THYRDE SHEAPHARDE

Enters. He is very deaf and quite old.
Sir, in faith nowe I come,
For yette have I not all done
That I have to doe;

SECOND SHEAPHARDE

Nowe seinge God hath gaithered us together,
With good harte I thanke hym of his grace.
Wellckome be thou,
Tudde, will we shape us to some solace?

THYRDE SHEAPHARDE

Solace woulde beste be seene
That we shape us to our suppere;
For meate and drinke well, I wene,
To eiche deede is moste deare.

**THE CHESTER
MYSTERIES**

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

Laye fourth iche man aleiche
What he hath lefte of his livereye;
And I will put fourth my piece
With my parte, firste of us all three.

Digs into his haversack.

SECOND SHEAPHARDE

Taking out victuals.

And suche store as my wife hade,
In your sighte sone shall you see,
For in good meate their is moche glee.
Heare is bread this daie was baken;
Onyans, garlicks and leickes,
Butter that boughte was in Blackon,
And greene cheese that will greese your cheekes.

THYRDE SHEAPHARDE

Taking out victuals.

And heare ale of Halton I have,
And whotte meate I hade to my hire;
A puddinge maye no man deprave,
And a jannacke of Lancaster shire.
Loe! heares a sheepes heade sawsed in ale,
And sower mylke my wife hade ordered,
A noble supper as well is seene.

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

Nowe will I caste off my cloke,
And put out parte of my liverye,
And put out that I have in my pocke.
My secchell to shake oute
To sheapardes am I not ashamed;
And this tonge pared rounde aboute,
With my tonge it shalbe atamed.
Howseinge enoffe have we heare,
While that we have heaven over our heades;
Nowe to wete our mouthes tyme were,
This flagette will I tame, yf thou reade us.

THYRDE SHEAPHARDE

And of this bottill nowe will I bibbe,
For heare is but of the beste;
Suche licore makes me to live.

**THE CHESTER
MYSTERIES**

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

Fellowes, nowe our bellye be full,
Thinke we on hym that kepes our flockes.
Blowe thy horne and (call) after Trowle,
And byde hym some of our bittlockes.

SECOND SHEAPHARDE

Well sayde, Hancken, by my south,
For that shrewe I suppose seekes us.
My horne to blowe I will not lette,
Tell that ladde have some of our leekes.

THYRDE SHEAPHARDE

Leekes to his livereye is likings,
Suche a lade nowher in lande is.
Blowe a note for that mittinge,
Whyle that horne nowe in thy hande is.

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

With this horne I shall make a howl
That he and all heaven shall heare;
Yender ladde, that sittes on a lowe,
The lowde of this horne shall heare.

Blows loudly.

*Here Trowle enters impudently and stands behind the
shepherds.*

TROWLE

Here sitte downe I will,
Harmless, as I hastelye hope;
No man heare shall drinke,
Save my selfe, the devill of the sop.

He snatches bottle. Drinks.

All this bottill I sette at littill,
For kinge nor duke by this daie
Rise I will not, but take my reste.
Yf any man come me bye,
And woulde witte which waie were beste.
My legge I leifte up as I lye,
And wishe hym the waie este or weste.

The old shepherds laugh.

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

Trowle, take teene to my talkings,
For thy teeith heare is good tugging,
While thy wethers bene walkinge,
And on this loyne thou maie have good luinge.

Throws him a bone.

TROWLE

Fye on your loynes and on your livereye!
You sause and your saverye.

SECOND SHEAPHARDE

For thou saves our sheepe,
Good knave, take kepe;
Seith thou maye not slepe,
Come eate of this sauce.

TROWLE

Naye, the durte is so depe
And the grobbes theirin doe crepe,
Therefore meate, yf I maie,
Of your dightinge to daie
Will I naughte, by no waie,
Tell I have my wages.
I wende to have been gaye:
See so ragged is myne araye,
Indignantly.
Aye, pynckes is your paye
To everye poore page.

SECOND SHEAPHARDE

Trowle, boys, for Godes fee!
Come eate a morseill with me,
And then wrastill will we
Here on this greene.

TROWLE

That shall I never flee,
Though yt be with all three,
That wages will I houlde.
Put hym fourth that moste is of mighte.

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

Trowle, better never thou knewe,
Eate of this meate for a knighte.

TROWLE

Naye, spare I will, thoughe I spewe,
All upon thy heade shall lighte.

SECOND SHEAPHARDE

Howe shoulde we suffer all this shame,
Of a shrewe thus to be shente?

**THE CHESTER
MYSTERIES**

THYRDE SHEAPHARDE

This ladde lusts to be lamed
And lose a limb ere he wente.

TROWLE

Have done, begyne we this game.

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

False lade, fye on thy face,
On this grounde thou shalte have a falle.

TROWLE

Hancken, sheapharde, shame thee I shall;
Ware leste thou welter here by the wall.

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

Boye, leste I breake thy bones,
Kneele downe and aske me a boone,
Leste I destroye thee heare on these stones.

*Going toward Trowle. They are about to rush at him,
when suddenly they see the star.*

What is all this lighte here,
That makes so brighte heare,
On my blacke beyrde?
For to see this lighte heare,
A man maye be afrighte heare,
For I am afeard.

SECOND SHEAPHARDE

Afraide, for a fear nowe,
May we be all nowe,
Ah! yet it is nighte,
Yet seemes yt daie nowe,
See I suche a sighte!

THYRDE SHEAPHARDE

Suche a sighte seemings,
And a lighte gleminge,
From a starre streminge,
It to me strocke.

TROWLE

A! God mighte is,
In yender starre lighte is,
Of the sonne this sighte is,
As yt nowe sheines.

SECOND SHEAPHARDE

Fellowes, will we
Knele downe on our knyde,
After confortes,
To the trewe Trenitie,
For to leade us to see
Our elderes Lorde.

They all kneel.

TROWLE

Lorde, of this lighte
Guyde us some sighte,
Why that it is sente.
Before this nighte,
Was I never so afrighte
Of the fermament.

*Here is chanting of the Gloria in Excelsis. At the end of
it the Firste Sheapharde speaketh:*

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

Fellowes in feare,
Maye you not heare
This mutinge on heichte?

SECOND SHEAPHARDE

A glorey and a glare,
Yet no man was nere
Within our sighte.

THYRDE SHEAPHARDE

Naye, it was a glorye!
Nowe am I sorye.

Chanting begins again.
But more songe.

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

As I them demed,
Celsis it seemed
That he sange.

Chanting again.

**THE CHESTER
MYSTERIES**

THYRDE SHEAPHARDE

What songe was this, say ye,
That they sange to us all three?
Expounded shall yt be,
Ere we hense passe.

The Angel enters behind and draws close to them.

TROWLE

Nay, it was glory, glory, glorious!
Me thoughte that note ran over the howse.
Naye, it was glory, glory, with a glo!
And moche of cellsis was thereto.

ANGEL

Sheaphardes, of this sighte
Be ye not afrighte,
For this is Gode's mighte,
Take this in mynde;
To Bethlehem nowe hie,
Ther you shall se in sighte,
That Christe is borne tonighte,
To ken all mankinde.

TROWLE

To Bethlehem take we the waye,
For with you I thinke to wende,
That Prince of Peace for to praye,
Heaven to have at our ende.
And singe we all, I rede,
Some mirth to his magistie;
For certain nowe shows it in deed,
The kinges sonne of heaven is he.

The Angel goes out at the right, followed by Trowle and the Sheaphardes. This is the end of the "Sheaphardes' Play." There is an interval, and in the same scene begins:

"The Offering ^{of} the Sheaphardes"

The Angel enters left, and crossing the stage, draws back the curtain of the Lady Shrine. The Sheaphardes enter left, and stop.

There follows an interval of chanting.

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

Heare I see Marye,
And Jesus Christe faste by,
Lapped in haye.

SECOND SHEAPHARDE

Kneyle we downe in hye,
And praye we hym of mercye,
And welckome hym worthelye.

THYRDE SHEAPHARDE

Awaye all our wo is,
And many mans more is!
Christe Lorde, let us kysse
The creche or the clothes.

TROWLE

Solace nowe, to see this,
Buildes in my breste blisse,
Never after to doe amyse
Thinges that hym loth is.

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

Whatever this oulde man that heare is,
Take heede howe his head is hoary.

**THE CHESTER
MYSTERIES**

MARIA

First lifts her eyes.
Sheaphardes, southlye I see
That my sonne you hither sente,
Through Godes mighte in magistie.
That in me lighte and heare is lente,
This man married was to me,
For no sin ner suche assente,
But to kepe my virginitie,
And trewlye for no other intente.

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

Greate God, sittinge in thy throne,
That made all thinges of naughte,
Nowe we maie thanke thee each one,
This is he that we have soughte.

SECOND SHEAPHARDE

Goe we nere anon,
With suche as we have broughte,
Lett us se yf we have oughte to proffer.

THYRDE SHEAPHARDE

Let us do hym homage.

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

Who shall goe firste? The page?

SECOND SHEAPHARDE

Naye, ye be father of age,
Therefore ye muste offer.

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

Kneeling at shrine.
Hail, kinge of heaven so hie!
Borne in a crib,
Heale, kinge! borne in a maydens bower,
Profittes did tell thou shouldest be our succore,
Thus clarkes doth saye.
Loe, I bringe thee a bell;
I praie thee save me from hell,
So that I maye with thee dwell,
And serve thee for aye.

SECOND SHEAPHARDE

Doing likewise.

Hail thee maker of the starre,
That stode us beforne;
Hail thee, blessed full barne,
Loe, sonne, I bringe thee a flaggette,
Theirby heinges a sponne,
To eate thy pottage with all at noone,
As I my selfe full ofte tymes have done,
With harte I prairie thee to take.

THYRDE SHEAPHARDE

Hail thee, granter of hope,
For in yeairth nowe thou dwelleste,
Loe, sonne, I bringe thee a cap
For I have nothing elles;
This gifte, sonne, I bringe thee is but small,
And though I come the hyndmoste of all,
When thou shall them to thy blesse call,
Goode Lorde, yet thinke on me.

TROWLE

Comes forward and kneels.

Of other gifts, my dear,
Have I non for to geve,
That is worth anye thinge at all,
But my good harte, while I live,
And my prayers tell death doe me call.

FIRSTE SHEAPHARDE

Nowe fare well, mother and mayde,
For of synne naughte thou wottests,
Thou haste brought fourth this daie,
Godes sonne of mighteste moste.
Wherefore men shall saye,
Blessed in everye coast and place
Be thou memoriall for me and for us all.
And that we maie from syne fall,
And stande ever in thy grace,
Our Lorde God be with thee.

TROWLE

Brethren, let us all three
Singinge walke homewardes;
Unkinde will I in no case be,
But preache ever that I can and crye,
As Gabryll taughte by his grace me,
Singinge awaye hense will we.

They go out chanting. The Angel closes the curtain of the Lady Shrine.

This is the end of the play of "The Offering of the Sheaphardes." There is an interval, and in the same scene begins the play of

"The Adoration of the Magi"

The Kinges enter left, looking towards the Lady Shrine.

FIRSTE KINGE

Mightye God, moste of mayne,
To honour thee we maye be fayne.
The starre I see it come againe,
That was out of our sighte.

THYRDE KINGE

A! Lorde, honoured be thou aye,
For nowe we shall knowe well the waye;
I will folowe it, in good faye,
My forwarde to fulfill.

FIRSTE KINGE

I hope without dread to daie
To see that childe in his araye;
But me thinkes, lordes, by my faye,
The starre it standeth stille.

SECONDE KINGE

That is a signe we be nere,
But highe hall see I non heare;
To a childe of suche power
This howsinge standeth Joe.

THYRDE KINGE

Nowe well I wotte, withouten were,
Without pride he will apeare,
To make men meeke in such manere,
An exsample us to shewe.

FIRSTE KINGE

The starre yender over the stable is,
I wotte we be not gone amisse,
And nowe there it is glente.

SECONDE KINGE

I wotte he wonnes here, i-wysse,
And this symple howse is his.
Ordayne we nowe that kinge of blisse
Apeartlye our presente.

FIRSTE KINGE

What presente beste will for hym fall,
Caste we here amonge us all;
For though he lye in an oxe stalle,
His mighte is never the lesse.
Also it seemes by this place,
That littill treasure his mother has;
Therefore helpe her in this case,
Golde shalbe my presente.

SECONDE KINGE

And sith he hath in hym godheade,
Me thinkes, as eate I breade,
Incense to geve hym through my rede,
In name of sacrifice.

THYRDE KINGE

You saie full well bouth, sires tow;e;
And myrre is good me thinkes also.
Sith he for man will suffer woe,
And dye on a rood-tree,
For myrre is beste to balmbe his thews,
That shall he have of me.

FIRSTE KINGE

Nowe we have proveid it here,
These geiftes be to hym moste dere,
Goe we fourth in good manere,
And make we our presente.

SECONDE KINGE

The starre it shines faier and cleare,
Over this stable, aye, entire;
Here is his woninge withouten were,
And here in is he lente.

*Here the Angel Gabriel draws back the curtain of the
Lady Shrine.*

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



3 9015 03939 6802

